

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION

ADDRESS

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DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION*

Planning is a continuous movement towards desired goals and, because of this, all major decisions have to be made by agencies informed by these goals and the economic and social purposes behind them. Indeed, perspective planning is of the essence of the planning process. As this process develops, there is a certain rythm of expansion in the development of the people and a sense of enterprise and achievement comes to them. The plan is a systematic reflection on problems and prospects and contains a catalogue of actions to be taken to achieve the desired objectives. If this has to come about, it has essentially to spring from below. District Development Planning should be envisaged as an integral part of the overall National Development Planning in the country. For analytical convenience, the subject could be dealt with under three broad sections :—

1. The concept of District Planning
2. The content of district administration
3. The methods, processes and mechanism of District Administration.

The above aspects do not in fact represent isolated factors but are inter-related. Further, each by itself is an extremely important subject. The attempt made below to deal with each of these aspects is necessarily brief.

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Planning is defined as the use of a rational design as contrasted with chance, the reaching of a decision before a line of action is taken. It is thus a process of devising a basis for a course of future action. In evolving such a course, the process should start from the bottom and planning should thus take a regional approach. Regional Planning is a recently developed science dealing with the broad aspects of inter relations between various forms of organised economic and social activities physically contained within a certain area. Regional planning has progressively attempted to present a special framework for social science disciplines, especially economics, through the development of a general theory of location and of space economy. It is thus concerned with human, economic and social activities distributed over a given territory such as the district. It starts with the assumption that the activities distributed over a region are neither arbitrary, nor the working of chance. They result rather from the inter-dependencies that give form to the economic space. Special patterns will change the shifts in the structure of demand and of production, in the level of technology and in the social and political organisation of the nation.

Regional planning is a recognised Governmental process which operates under the objectives established by the Government and is subject to the sanction of the people. If planning has to be subjected to the sanction of the people, it has necessarily to come from below. The lowest level from which a plan from below could be thought of would be the district. What exactly is meant by a district plan? It is not a State plan broken up districtwise. It does not emerge simply by cutting the financial sectoral allocations into provisions for each district and adding together such provisions into a plan allocation for the district. The district plan should help to exploit the economic potential of the region through rational use of land and other resources keeping in view the more essential needs of the district. It should be an organised plan that would guide both the Government and the people to endeavour in fostering a better and more efficient

regional economic community. Greater emphasis should be placed on the benefit accrued from each rupee spent in the physical development of the district. Further, the district plan should act as a guide to the Government and the people in improving and developing the form and organisation of the region based on the changing social, economic and physical requirements and abilities of the people. As emphasised earlier, the district plan is just not a summation of the budget provisions for the district. It has to be separately framed highlighting the local needs and the availability of resources. A district plan is, therefore, a comprehensive scheme for the co-ordinated and systematic development of the region. Added to these, as the district plan is subservient to the State and the country's plan, it has also to keep in view the general policies behind the plan like the emphasis on the Family Planning Programme and so on. Therefore, while on the one hand, a district plan has to lay emphasis on the local requirements which may result in special schemes for the area, on the other hand, it has to keep in view the State and National policies, which are binding on the district. A district plan, based on different conditions, but at the same time part of a larger plan, is necessary for the following, among other reasons :—

- (a) The problems faced by us are so difficult, the development required is so large and the possibility of mobilising required resources by way of Central and State revenues is so limited that, for maximisation of effort, it is essential to explore the possibility of local mobilisation of resources for local development.
- (b) The sectors in which our development has been specially slow are those of agriculture, small-scale industries and related activities. A central plan can only provide certain broad guide lines for development in these sectors. For active results to be obtained, specific schemes of development have to be formulated on the basis of detailed knowledge of the local situation.

(c) The need to integrate sectoral schemes of development so as to ensure co-ordinated and balanced growth requires no emphasis. Various kinds of industry, agriculture, transport, social services, etc., have to be co-ordinated so as to ensure the best results. Urban, semi-urban and rural areas in a given region have to be brought together when the possibilities of further development are worked out. This can only be done if sectoral development programmes are integrated not only at the National and State levels but also at levels much below these like the district.

Added to these, the decisions taken at the higher levels should have reference to local needs and resources. There should be scope in the final plan-frame to include the decisions of the district authorities also. The district plans should not remain just a concept or a paper plan but should be something vital in operation. Planning at the State level should not be a highly officialised and Secretariat affair.

II

The content of the district plan differs from district to district as the needs, priorities and the resources differ from region to region. For example, the emphasis of a district plan may have to be on a particular product for which that district is known and one of the main aims of the plan may, therefore, be the exploitation of that regional product. Secondly, the determination of the content of the plan should be based on a systematic survey of the area with reference to availability of resources and needs and the district plan should be entirely based on them. The economic development of a district is a complex process in which economic and non-economic factors are closely interwoven. It can best be defined by its major objective, *viz.*, the exploitation of all productive resources in order to expand real income of the district and eventually of the State. The district development

should concern itself not only with man's material needs, but also with the improvement of the social conditions of his life. Development is, therefore, not only economic growth, but growth *plus* change—social, cultural and institutional, as well as economic. It is, therefore, clear that the content of the district plan would consist of several items and the range would be so vast that it would be impossible to achieve all at a stroke. Fixing of priorities becomes more vital and the priorities will have to be fixed keeping in view two factors, *viz.*, general policies in the larger interest and urgent local needs. For example, a district plan has to be prepared for the Tungabhadra Project area consisting of Raichur and Bellary Districts in Mysore State. Here, the urgent need is to utilise the irrigational potentialities available as a result of the project. The plan should focus attention on the water distribution problems, water management supply of inputs for increased agricultural production, the road development in the ayacut and the creation of storage and marketing facilities. Actual needs of the district should be taken into account while fixing priorities and formulating a district plan. Given the assumption that the district plan is not a summation of lists of departmental schemes, and that there is minimal base of information and knowledge regarding local conditions, the essential stage in the formulation would appear to be the preparation of the physico-geographic plan of socio-economic overheads ; spelling out the objectives and strategy of development on a consideration of the past achievements and future requirements ; fixation of priorities ; integration of connected schemes in the district ; integration of schemes of the State and country levels wherever such schemes are guided by set policies ; and more than anything else, effective implementation of the schemes and objective evaluation of the results. Starting from the marshalling of information on resources and proceeding to the selection of schemes, feasibilities, priorities, chronological sequence of implementation and, finally, evaluation and assessment, the path would be in a difficult terrain and require skilful steersmanship for reaching the destination.

III

The processes, methods and mechanism of district planning present a subject which is almost too broad to be dealt with here. We may deal with important points. One relates to the infra-structure needs of the area and the other to the administrative mechanism whereby the inputs are supplied or the actual physical tasks are accomplished. The creation of the infra-structure would be necessary to provide the basis for future plans. For example, the formation of roads, the construction of godowns and the establishment of markets are necessary for an accentuated agricultural production plan of any region and would therefore form the infra-structure part of the plan. The administrative mechanism consists of two sectors—Governmental and private. A great deal of effort is required on the part of the private sector no less than of Government. There are, for example, individual firms which could provide some of the services or execute some of the projects. Co-operative institutions have a vital role to play. The success of the district plan depends on how well the activities of all these and of Government are co-ordinated. The activities of the Community Development movement will have to be knit into the developmental work of other agencies. All this postulates an adequate supply of trained personnel at the District and field levels.



